

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Frank Watson

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Illinois Statecraft* Oral History project

Interview # ISL-A-L-2012-036

Frank Watson, an Illinois legislator, and IL Senate Minority Leader from 2003 to 2008, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft - Legislators* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Aug 7, 2012                      Location: Watson residence in Greenville, Illinois  
Date: Aug 14 & 30, '12              Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield  
Date: Oct 1, 2012                      Location: Watson residence in Greenville, Illinois  
Date: Oct 10, 2012, May 8 & 13, 2013      Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential  
Library, Springfield

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview being  
processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_      Total Time: 2:26 + 1:47 + 1:34 + 2:03 + 1:27 + 1:14 + 2:05 / 2.43  
+ 1.78 + 1.57 + 2.05 + 1.45 + 1.23 + 2.08 = 12.59 hrs

Session 1: Early years, entry into politics thru first term in IL House, 1978-80

Session 2: Legislative career in the 1980s

Session 3: Legislative career during the Jim Edgar administration

Session 4: Legislative years 1994-1997 & Education reform

Session 5: Legislative years during the George Ryan administration, 1997-2002

Session 6: Years as IL Senate Minority Leader, and Senator Barack Obama

Session 7: Senate Minority Leader during Governor Blagojevich administration

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on February 27, 2014.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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# Abstract

## Frank Watson, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISL-A-L-2012-036

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Frank Watson was born on July 26th, 1945 in St. Louis, Missouri, and grew up in Greenville, Illinois, where his father owned and operated a pharmacy. He attended Purdue University, and following his graduation in 1968 he returned to Greenville and took over the family pharmacy business. He joined the local JCs and became active in the community, and in 1978 he made his first run for the Illinois legislature as a Republican in a Democratic leaning district, winning the election. In 1982, following a legislative redistricting, Watson ran for the Illinois Senate and won.

From 1983 through January, 2009 Watson served in the Illinois State Senate. He steadily moved up in the Senate leadership, working with the Senate's Republican leader, James 'Pate' Philip. During those years, Watson was a vocal and powerful advocate on educational issues, and voted as a fiscal hawk and social conservative throughout his career. He was a sponsor in the Senate for Illinois's welfare-to-work legislation, which passed during the Jim Edgar administration. From 2003 through 2008 he was the Senate Minority Leader, years that coincided with the governorship of Rod Blagojevich. Watson spoke at length about Governor Blagojevich's troubled administration, and also shared his memories of Barack Obama during the time Obama served in the Illinois state senate. In October, 2008 Senator Watson suffered a stroke, which led to his decision to resign from office in early 2009, following the impeachment trial for Governor Blagojevich.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Governor Rod Blagojevich; Illinois state senator Barack Obama; Governor George Ryan; Republican politics in south central Illinois; Greenville, Illinois; Governor Jim Thompson; Governor Jim Edgar; Senator James 'Pate' Philip; Speaker of the House Mike Madigan; educational reform in Illinois; Chicago school reform; the Cutback Amendment of 1980; redistricting in Illinois

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